

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

December 1980

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GREVILLEA GLABELLA - A NEW RECORD FOR SMITHS REEF FOREST

A single specimen of a dwarf red-flowered grevillea was found along the Maldon Railway line during the Club walk in October, and has been identified as Rosemary Grevillea.

It has unusually fine leaves, and was almost prostrate- quite unlike the robust shrub often grown in gardens.

Shown at about twice size.

Rosemary Grevillea was once known as *Grevillea rosmarinifolia*, and has been reported from Barkers Creek, but I do not know of any previous sighting from

the Smiths Reef Forest. The specimen found has slightly hairy leaves; other specimens of Rosemary Grevillea that I have seen have had hairless leaves. The outside of the flower is completely hairless, as is the style and ovary, except for a hair patch at the base of the ovary.

E.P.

President : Mr G. Sitch Ph. 72 2734
Secretary : Mr S. Bruton 72 3050
Treasurer : Mr L. Bransgrove 72 2772
Newsletter: Mr G. Broadway 72 2513

Monthly meetings are held on the second Friday of each month (except January), at 8 p.m. in the Castlemaine Education Centre (SEC buildings, Mostyn Street, Castlemaine).

Visitors and prospective members are invited to attend the club's sessions.

OR, How to be mistaken without trying!



Several seasons ago I noticed a small plant growing in the mud flats of Kalimna. Although smaller than the common Grass Trigger Plant, it had the column and petal arrangements typical of a trigger plant and so was obviously a *Stylidium*.

When I got home, I looked up Willis, to get these alternatives:

- Petals unequal, paired laterally, leaves often rosetted, widespread in W.SW and far E. *Stylidium inundatum*

- Petals almost equal, paired vertically, leaves not rosetted, widespread on damp ground. *Stylidium despectum*



Petals
white with
pale purple
patch

Words like "almost" and "often" are loved by key constructors, and equally disliked by key users; however the important words here are "paired vertically" and "paired horizontally", but what do they mean? I asked around, and the best reply was to look up a sketch. Accordingly, reference to Black's Flora of South Australia was made. There seemed to be little doubt for the flowers seemed to be identical to *Stylidium despectum*, the Small Trigger Plant. Thus, this species was added to the Kalimna plant list.

However, in April 1978, a note appeared in the Victorian Naturalist written by Cliff Beauglehole, that "*Stylidium despectum*. Best omitted from the Victorian Flora. The author, J.H. Willis and many others have never seen this species within the State" When the "Check List of Victorian Flora" was published, the Small Trigger Plant was left out. So could it be that we have a unique plant in Castlemaine?

This spring I looked again for the Small Trigger Plant and found it to be quite common again on the damp patches in Kalimna and there seemed to be no doubt about its correct identification. I then sent some specimens to Dr Parsons of Latrobe University. His reply included:-

"All of the so called records (of *S. despectum*) being *inundatum* which can be either rosetted or not. The petal character is the important one and it is only clear in fresh or pickled specimens"

As well, Dr Parsons sent a bottle to pickle some specimens in.

My next step was to read the "Supplement to Black's Flora of South Australia, listing corrections to the original flora. Here is noted

that Dr Willis had discovered *Stylidium brachyphyllum* in South Australia and that it had formerly been confused with *S. despectum*. This appeared to be worth following up. Willis does not list this species for Victoria, but Churchill and de Corona in "Distribution of Victorian Plants" give *S. brachyphyllum* as an incorrect name for *S. inundatum*. Curtis, in her "Students Flora of Tasmania" gives both *S. brachyphyllum* and *S. despectum* with sketches of both.



S. brachyphyllum



S. despectum

So the Kalimna plant is really *Stylidium inundatum*, or "Hundreds and Thousands", and the sketch in Black is wrong, and *Stylidium despectum* has still to be found!

This leads to a further question: in cases like this, how do we know which name applies to which plant?

The vital information comes from the original specimen to which the name was first given; this specimen is called the type specimen.

The original *despectum* was named by Robert Brown in 1810, and the name *Stylidium despectum* applies to all samples like this original sample. When small trigger plants were found in Victoria, the petal arrangement of the type specimen was no longer obvious, and, from the leaf arrangement no doubt, the name *S. despectum* was given. Later on this was corrected and the name *S. brachyphyllum* was given, from a specimen first named by Sonder in 1845. Later it was considered that this was the same species as *S. inundatum*, a name given by Robert Brown in 1810. If two names are given to a plant the earliest valid name is the correct one, and so our specimen is correctly known as *Stylidium inundatum*.

Hundreds of Thousands I have seen hundreds of these trigger plants in the Smiths Reef Forest, but scarcely Hundreds and Thousands.

Cliff Beaglehole writes however:-

"In the Glenelg Shire S.W. of S.A., I have seen 5 species of these little species in absolute tens of thousands, in fact millions....
.. in Red/Yellow Gum country I have seen 4 species in 2 square inches."

BIRD ATLAS REPORTS

The Atlas people have asked us to supply Unusual Record Reports for the following birds which were recorded by members of the club. Unfortunately I have not kept the original report sheets so do not know who recorded them. If you can help, please ask me for one of the forms

- 136 Grey Plover
- 992 English Song Thrush
- 616 Yellow-throated Honeyeater
- 624 Yellow-tinted Honeyeater
- 178 Glossy Ibis

It may be that, although you did not make the original report, you are able to add some information to the records.



EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF A FIELD NATURALIST:

W.E. LYFORD.

September, 1958.

(With thanks to the Benalla Field Nat)

Mrs. Kookaburra was perched on a branch of the Acacia tree that shades the wood-heap. Mr. Kookaburra was on a post nearby. Both were placed in strategic positions where they commanded a clear view of the wood-heap, the chips that had accumulated during the Winter, and the surrounding area.

I had observed these two birds for a number of years and the partnership had proved very successful from every point of view with the exception of one very dry season when I found the off-spring on the ground beneath the nest. It had probably died of starvation. Incidentally the life-span of the Kookaburra under favourable conditions may be as long as twenty years, but the pairs do not rear young every year.

The pair under observation inhabit the area surrounding my property during Winter and Spring. It is a good Winter camp being sheltered from the West, the South and the East. But they move to another part of their territory for the dry Summer season where there are a number of large dams and a plentiful supply of yabbies.

Mrs. K. is young and good-looking and had attracted the amorous glances of a number of young bachelors, all of whom had been warned off by Mr. K. in the only practical manner known to wild life. Open combat. Another threat to his authority had come less than a month ago when a new challenger made a bid to win the favours of Mrs. K. They had fought it out, beak and all and no holds barred on a level piece of ground with the fair lady watching the combat from a convenient perch on a low horizontal limb of a big red gum tree near the creek.

The sparring had continued for a considerable time with each bird looking for an opening which would give him an advantage. The tactics were not dissimilar to those employed in a boxing match. But eventually experience and guile proved too good for youth. The old-timer feinted and seized the youngster by the throat in a vice-like grip of his powerful beak. He hung on, exerting all the strength of which he was capable and gradually forced his opponent's head to the ground there to lay in submission - a defeated bird.

Watching the fight from across the creek I found it interesting to speculate whether this was the conclusion or only the end of the first round. As it transpired the first round proved to be the last. Mr. K. kept his grip on the other's throat, constricting the wind-pipe and the flow of blood to the head. But he did not kill the other bird. Sensing that his adversary had had enough he released his grip and straight away joined his spouse on the bough of the tree where they squatted closely side by side and celebrated the victory in traditional manner. As for the challenger he did not delay his departure but retired to fresh fields with a very sore throat. And it is to be presumed that he was a much wiser bird.

And now the happy couple were launched upon another year of conjugal bliss. The rays of the late September sun were warm on the wood-heap. Both birds were motionless, their eyes concentrated on the ground within their field of vision. Ah! - a movement. His head cocked sideways and suddenly he pounced. The thud of his landing could be heard yards away. A quick thrust downwards and then upwards and he flew to the acacia with a young snake in his beak.

Then began a play which may possibly be frequently enacted but rarely seen by the bird-watcher. He had a snake. She loved snakes. The mating season was at hand and she was hungry. She wanted the snake. He began to kill it. He bashed it on the limb of the Acacia tree. She was immediately alongside, watching intently and offering advice in soft wheedling tones. He continued to bash the snake first on one side and then on the other. He let it fall to the ground and followed it down. It was quite helpless. He picked it up and flew to a log on the wood-heap where he proceeded to give it another bashing. Quickly she was alongside with more advice. Her cooings and moanings now became insistent. Surely it must be dead by now. She thought the world of him. She loved him. She would produce for him a bonny son. But oh! dear! - she WAS hungry. How could she lay eggs on an empty stomach. It now became clear that he was teasing her. The snake had been dead when he purposely dropped it from the Acacia tree. Yet he continued to bash it on the log. She sat about two feet away cooing and conversing in kookaburra language. Then quite suddenly he flew with the snake about twenty yards up the gully. She was right on his tail when he landed. With a sideways swing of the head he tossed it at her. She caught it deftly, threw it in the air so that it hung momentarily in a vertical position, her wide open beak poised to receive it as it fell, and her head so positioned that it slid straight down her gullet.

Now content she shook her big head and flew to a fence post where she settled down to digest her dinner; while her mate resumed his vigil at the wood-heap in the hope of getting a meal for himself.

Report of 20th Annual Meeting held at Maryborough on Saturday and Sunday, October 11 and 12.

At this meeting, the chief Executive officers were elected, President Dale Nichols of Maryborough, and Secretary-Treasurer Ern Perkins of our club. 12 clubs were represented by 37 delegates. Camp-Outs for 1981 were agreed. The first one being at Castlemaine to be held in conjunction with the Victorian Field Naturalists on the Labour Day Weekend, March 7,8,9. The August Camp-out to be held at Colac, and one in October at Donald.

A report on the Cliff Beaglehole Publishing Fund was adopted. This fund is in a healthy condition financially and during the year had a welcome donation from Kingston Safari Tours of \$500. Another trip to the Lamington Plateau is planned for next year. The fund has decided to publish a checklist of the Flora of Victoria. The last publication by the fund was launched by Mr Errey of Marnambool who spoke warmly of the work of Cliff Beaglehole and his family.

It was agreed that each club would undertake to cooperate with the Wildlife and Fisheries Department in reporting the sighting of Cockatiels in their district. Jack Wheeler of Geelong suggested a survey on the life history of Cockatoos and Cockatiels and this was agreed to. In connection with the destruction of cockatoos taking place in some districts, Stan Bruton moved that we approach the Minister and seek to have a licence system for the shooting of cockatoos by landowners and others - agreed. The delegate from Timboon reported a grant of swamp land had been offered with a request from the donor that the Field Nats recommend a suitable authority to control and supervise the grant. This is to be done.

The retiring president's report referred to the topics dealt with during the year which included :-

Controlled burning of forests

"Dial a Permit" for shooting of protected fauna

Roadside clearing

Alienation of Point Danger Heathland at Portland

Toxic waste disposal

Policing of the protection of the Freckled Duck

He said that the Field Nats in providing a forum for discussion on common interest of concern was doing valuable work in the Western part of the state.

The excursions held in conjunction with this weekend were at the Slate Quarries on Saturday morning, local flora and the aboriginal wells in Paddy's Ranges in the afternoon.

It rained all day but this didn't seem to stop anybody. On Sunday, another area of Paddy's Ranges including the Big Reef, a most unusual formation of huge quartz rocks was visited.

After the business of the meeting concluded on the Saturday, Curly Hartup of Newstead showed a fine collection of his slides. It included a section on landscapes which was enthusiastically received by those present.

SOME NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

Grampians Campout : Thanks to Geoff Sitch for organising the weekend.

Club Herbarium : At a recent meeting it was decided to build up a club herbarium as a long-term project. Mr C. Beauglehole has indicated his willingness to assist in the setting-up.

Keep watching for further announcements.

Slide Museum : Another project which was recently decided upon was the setting up of a slide collection, using the spare slides of club members. Most of us usually take more than one slide of each subject and then wonder what to do with the extras. They are too good to throw away, but we may have another of the same subject which we prefer. Well now they can be donated to the club so that there will be a bank of slides available for reference, as well as providing valuable resource material for any member who wishes to illustrate a talk, etc. N.B. Who would like to be the club slide collection curator ?

Historical Tours : Following their recent successful effort in conducting local historical tours for the Castlemaine State Festival in November, members of the Historical Society have agreed to conduct excursions again in conjunction with the WVFNCA campout in March.

Wood Chipping : In reply to our letter, we have been informed that a survey of wood-pulping in Gippsland has been carried out, so that an informed decision can be made, findings will be published so that public comment can be made. The Forests Commission will make a speaker available if required, and we will accept this offer at some suitable date.

RAY'S CORNER Historical notes from Ray Bradfield

(From the files of the "Mount Alexander Mail")

Large Emu March 11, 1859. On Thursday last, an emu of the largest size was shot by a Mr Richardson, on the Bendigo Road, about half-way between Sawpit Gully (now Elphinstone), and Harcourt. The bird got into a paddock from which it was prevented from escaping by the dogs. Their barking attracted the attention of their master, and on discovering the cause, he got a gun, and soon despatched the intruder.

Some idea of the magnitude of this emu may be found when it is stated that it measured seven feet three inches from beak to claws, and weighed fifty-seven pounds. We believe that the emu is a very rare bird in the vicinity of Castlemaine, and especially one of such unusually large proportions as that noticed.

CLUB CALENDAR

Friday, December 12. International Night. Speaker. Mr Winterbottom. This is also the final meeting of the year and a special supper will be held to mark the occasion. Members are asked to contribute a plate of goodies for the supper. (Satay perhaps, or Nasi Goreng ?)

Saturday December 13 Outing to Expedition Pass.

The main aim on this occasion is the spotting of birds, so come with your binocs and your bird list.

Saturday February 14 1981 Outing to Trentham Falls. Leader: S. Bruton.

March 1981 Meeting and excursions to be held in conjunction with the W.V.F.N.C.A.

Saturday March 7

6.30 p.m. WVFNCA business meeting

8.00 Book launching. "The Alpine Plants"
by Mr Frank Robbins .

(At one time a teacher in Castlemaine. Now retired and residing in Bendigo)

8.15 Talks on Plant Propagation and
Birds of Central Victoria

Sunday March 8

6.30 Meeting VFNCA.

Business and Annual Meeting

8.00 Castlemaine District : Panel

Excursions Both days

9.30 a.m.

1.30 p.m.

New Victorian Plant List

One of the highlights of the WVFNCA meeting at Maryborough was the launching of "Victorian Vascular Plants Checklists" by Cliff Beaglehole of Portland.

This represents the result of over 40 years work surveying the plant life of the state, as well as untold hours of desk work checking findings, and research into plant names, many of which have been changed during the last few years. Many plants were also added to the list.

All species, native and introduced, are listed in alphabetical order. Common names and scientific names are both used.

An invaluable book for the botanist. Some copies still available through the club.

DECEMBER

BULLFROGS ON PROWL



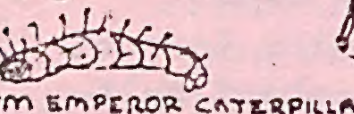
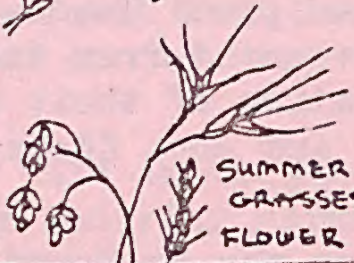
CHRISTMAS BEETLE



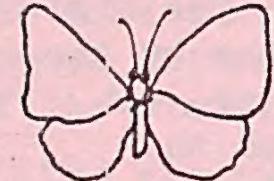
CUTLEAF GOOSEBILL



SUMMER GRASSES FLOWER



GUM EMPEROR CATERPILLA



MALE COMMON BROWN BUTTERFLY